



**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH  
BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE  
ESTABLISHMENT OF A PUBLIC/PRIVATE  
HISTORICAL ARCHIVE**

**FINAL REPORT AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Councilor Vincent Lombardi, City Council Liaison  
Richard Candee, Portsmouth Historical Society  
Alan Cohen, Community Member  
Charles Doleac, Portsmouth Peace Treaty Forum  
Elizabeth Farish, Strawberry Banke Museum  
Christine Friese, Portsmouth Public Library  
Thomas Hardiman, Jr., Portsmouth Athenaeum  
Jeff Keefe, Portsmouth Athenaeum  
Kristen Peterson, Community Member  
Susan Sterry, Historic Cemeteries Committee  
Emma Stratton, Portsmouth Historical Society  
Thomas R Watson, Portsmouth Athenaeum

**Excerpts limited to  
conclusions and  
proposed  
recommendations**

## Leadership Recommendations and Goals

Now is the time to collaborate and create a public/private Archive. Organizations are receptive to the idea and are prepared to work cooperatively to make it a reality. A well-designed Archive benefits each organization financially and offers state-of-the-art preservation for items in a central location.

The Task Force recommends that first and foremost the city show its support to move toward the creation of a shared space among the represented groups, acknowledging that such a space would be in the cultural and economic interest of the city and the non-profits. For the first time, the city and non-profit organizations have come to an agreement to support a combined Archive, sharing the overhead of temperature and humidity control, fire protection and other special considerations required to preserve Archived materials.

The first step in this support should be the continuation of this committee under the new Council. Once renewed, this committee should address the following:

1. *Legal entity options*

What would be the best legal entity for a shared Archive? Among the considerations are the legal and financial interests of all parties and ways to keep the consortium viable to receive a variety of grants, donations and other contributions. While some grantors require a grantee to be registered as a 501(c)(3) organization, other grants are available to government entities. How can the Archive best take advantage of available financing and how can each organization's interest best be protected for the long term? What form of organization would allow for new entities to join? What would happen should a member choose to remove its collection in the future?

2. *Space requirements*

The committee should, in the very near future, work with a consultant to analyze more closely the space and environmental needs to sustain such an Archive. The funds should be appropriated to pay for such a study, based on similar studies carried out in the past 10 years.

### 3. *Funding*

The committee should continue to identify ways in which to pay for the Archive, considering what will come from each organization and what funds might be raised in the community and through grant opportunities.

### 4. *Organization membership and responsibilities*

The committee should reach a consensus as to the makeup of the new ongoing shared Archive. Will participants beyond those currently represented on the Task Force be considered? Additionally, what will be the responsibilities of each member organization? Based on the determined legal entity, how will each organization be represented on the governing board?

### 5. *Identification of materials to include*

As indicated above, the number and types of items currently archived differs greatly. The committee will need to set boundaries as to which types of materials should be retained in the shared space, considering object sizes, space limitations and archiving methodologies.

## **Conclusion**

The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Historical Archives has invested significant time and effort to perform due diligence regarding the viability of a public/private partnership to provide a museum quality historical archival facility. The Archive is intended to collect, preserve and provide access to the critical components that document the rich history of Portsmouth. Portsmouth's history should be readily available to all who have an interest in its early native American inhabitants, the emergence of democracy and the fascinating path in time that paved the way to the vibrant community we enjoy today.

Currently the four primary stewards of Portsmouth history, (The City of Portsmouth, The Portsmouth Athenaeum, Strawberry Banke Museum and Portsmouth Historical Society) are all struggling with the quality and quantity of space needed to meet their ever-growing collection needs. The Blue Ribbon Task Force is made up of executives and board members of all four of these key institutions, as well as concerned citizens and representatives of the city. Since 1979, several past efforts to create a historical Archive

for Portsmouth have failed for two primary reasons: an unwillingness for institutions to collaborate and no commitment to funding. Separately each institution has made legitimate efforts to solve their archival challenges. However, each of these attempts has been isolated and most often set in motion by crisis. As a result, they have been costly and have fallen short of meeting the comprehensive needs of the community.

**The City of Portsmouth and its leading historic institutions have a unique opportunity to work together to solve Portsmouth’s historical archival challenge through a well-planned, comprehensive approach. The entities involved are unanimous in their support of continuing to pursue the viability of this vision. They recognize this opportunity will provide needed cost efficiencies, expand future funding opportunities and improve resource allocation by allowing them to better execute their individual missions.**

Should the shared Archive become a reality, the community wins by being a good steward and limiting the risk of losing valuable historic documents and artifacts. The consortium’s effort would make researching Portsmouth's history more efficient for all and enhance educational opportunities for students of all ages. A concerted effort to preserve and provide efficient access to Portsmouth's past will leave an ongoing legacy for future generations.

## Recommendations

As history continues to unfold, the urgency for proper archival space will increase exponentially, as will the cost and space limitations required to solve the issue. In time, the current leadership will change in the city government as well as the boards and executives of the core historical institutions. To take advantage of the key components in place today that can move this effort to fruition, The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Historical Archives strongly recommends the following:

1. City Council vote to continue the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Historical Archives to pursue the following recommendations;
2. The city and participating institutions jointly pursue a conservation assessment in 2024 to quantify the amount of archives to be stored from each participating

institution and the space required to properly steward them. The estimated cost is \$150,000;

3. The Task Force develop and recommend to the City Council the most appropriate legal entity under which the Archive will operate;
4. The Task Force review and recommend which organizations will make up the consortium and how they will be represented in the operations of the Archive;
5. The Task Force develop and recommend a funding plan that includes the city and participating organizations, as well as the availability of public and private resources;
6. The Task Force recommend suitable locations to house the Archive and the City Council earmark the preferred location for future development as the Archive;
7. The Task Force pursue such other issues and make other recommendations that are related to the establishment of the Archive.